

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6141
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY ANAKRA POUCH
AMEMBASSY ATHENS POUCH
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E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, PFOR
SUBJECT: ALLIANCE EAST-WEST STUDY: ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION ON
RELIGION

REFS: (A) NATO 7699, (B) STATE 181724 (BOTH REFS NOTAL)

1. THERE FOLLOWS THE TEXT OF AN ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO
THE EAST-WEST STUDY ENTITLED "THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE IN THE
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USSR AND THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A PROSPECTIVE
VIEW". THE PAPER COMES UNDER SECTION AII OF THE IS OUT-
LINE (REF A) AND IS TOPIC 5 OF REF B.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

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SUBJECT: THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE IN THE USSR AND THE EASTERN

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A PROSPECTIVE VIEW

1. RELIGION IS REGARDED BY THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES AS AN ENEMY TO FIGHT AND ITS DISAPPEARANCE, THEORETICALLY AT LEAST, ONE OF THE INDISPENSABLE CONDITIONS FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE "SOCIALIST SOCIETY". EACH COMMUNIST PARTY, THEREFORE, PURSUES A MORE OR LESS INTENSIFIED ATHEISTIC CAMPAIGN, EVEN THOUGH IT IS OFTEN CAREFULLY UNDERLINED THAT ANY ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES THAT ARE BEING ADOPTED ARE ONLY MEANT AGAINST THOSE WHO VIOLATE THE LAWS CONCERNING RELIGION AND NOT AGAINST THE BELIEVERS AS SUCH. SUCH AN ACTION IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE RECOGNITION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, WHICH IS PROCLAIMED IN ALL EASTERN EUROPEAN CONSTITUTIONS BUT MERELY AMOUNTS TO A MORE OR LESS EXTENSIVE FREEDOM OF CULT.

2. THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF THE WP COUNTRIES CONTINUES TO BE BASED ON LENIN'S PRINCIPLES. THESE IMPLY, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A FUNDAMENTAL INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN "SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM" AND RELIGIOUS IDEALISM, AND CALL FOR SEPARATION BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH AND FOR REMOVING THE LATTER FROM THE SCHOOL. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, SOME OF THESE PRINCIPLES HAVE NOT BEEN EVENLY ENFORCED, DUE, MAINLY, TO THE INTERNAL SITUATIONS

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OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES.

3. THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE IS FOR ALL THE WP COUNTRIES, WITH NO EXCEPTION, A PROBLEM AFFECTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE STATE. AS SUCH, IT IS DEALT WITH VERY CAUTIOUSLY, MAINLY WHERE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES (LINKS BETWEEN RELIGION AND AGRARIAN SOCIETY) OR THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ONES (CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FEELINGS AND MINORITIES' PROBLEMS) CONSTITUTE A POTENTIAL DANGER TO THE COMMUNIST SOCIETIES, TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND, ULTIMATELY, TO THEIR EXISTENCE.

4. AS A MATTER AFFECTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE WP COUNTRIES, THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE IS CAREFULLY FOLLOWED AND INFLUENCED BY THE USSR, WHICH PURSUES THOSE OBJECTIVES BOTH BY PLACING ITSELF AS A REFERENCE POINT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATE AND ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND BY EXERTING ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RELIGIOUS POLICY, INTERNAL AND FOREIGN, OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED. INCIDENTALLY, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH - OBEDIENT, AS IS KNOWN, TO MOSCOW - HAS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THIS SITUATION AND HAS MANAGED

TO EXTEND ITS AUTHORITY OVER ALL THE OTHER ORTHODOX
CHURCHES IN THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

5. THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IS A PROBLEM THAT IS ALSO
BOUND TO AFFECT THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE WP COUNTRIES,
DUE TO THE DEEPER INTEREST, AS COMPARED TO THE PAST,
SHOWN BY THE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION IN THE DESTINY OF
BELIVERS WHEREVER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS LIMITED.
IN FACT, FOLLOWING THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE, THE ISSUE
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS STRICTLY CONNECTED TO THAT
OF THE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (IT SHOULD BE NOTED,

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HOWEVER, THAT PRINCIPLE VII OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT
ON THE RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS,
INCLUDING FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, RELIGION
OR FAITH, DID NOT SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE RELIGIOUS
SITUATION IN THE WP COUNTRIES). TO BE MENTIONED IN

THIS CONNECTION ON THE COUNTERMEASURES ALREADY ADOPTED
BY THE USSR IN ORDER TO NEUTRALIZE THE HOSTILITY WITH
A RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND WHICH DEVELOPED IN THE WEST
AGAINST THE COMMUNIST REGIMES (SOVIET RELATIONS WITH
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THE HOLY SEE APPEAR TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS POLICY).

6. IN THIS REGARD, ALL EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES,
IN THE WAKE OF A STRENGTHENED DETENTE AND A GENERAL
IMPROVEMENT OF THE WORLD POLITICAL CONDITIONS, HAVE
MULTIPLIED THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE HOLY SEE, SOMETIMES
ACHIEVING CONCRETE RESULTS AND SOMETIMES AT LEAST AN
IMPROVEMENT OF THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE.
THIS NEW PHASE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VATICAN
AND THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE
THANKS TO THE CONVERGENCE OF SOME SPECIFIC INTERESTS.
THE HOLY SEE ACTED MAINLY FOR PASTORAL REASONS THAT
CAN BE SUMMARISED IN THE PRIMARY NEED TO MAINTAIN
ALIVE THE LOCAL CHURCHES' STRUCTURES AND TO ENSURE,
IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE NECESSARY RENEWAL OF THE
ECCLESIASTIC HIERARCHY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE
COMMUNIST COUNTRIES - FOSTERING AS THEY DO A STRONG
DIFFIDENCE TOWARDS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ITS DOCTRINE
- AIMED AT NEUTRALIZING AT HOME THE POTENTIALITIES
INHERENT IN THE MORAL AND HENCE POLITICAL WEIGHT OF
THE HOLY SEE BY KEEPING CONVENIENTLY OPEN THEIR DIALOGUE
WITH THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.
- HOWEVER, CONTACTS HAVE BEEN MADE EASIER THROUGH
THE IMPACT OF THE OUTSTANDING EFFORT DISPLAYED BY THE
HOLY SEE IN PEACE DEFENCE THROUGHOUT THE MOST TROUBLED
AREAS IN THE WORLD, THE SUPPORT GIVEN BY IT TO THE
EMERGING NATIONS IN AFRICA AND ASIA, THE ECUMENICAL
DRIVE OF THE POST-CONCILIUM CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE
VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE CSCE WORKS
AT HELSINKI: ALL THESE FACTORS HAVE WON IT A UNANIMOUS
RECOGNITION.

7. THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE WITHIN
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THE WP COUNTRIES AS WELL AS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN
THE LATTER AND THE HOLY SEE ARE BURDENED BY MANY
UNCERTAINTIES THAT MAKE ANY FORECASTS ALEATORY.
- HOWEVER, IT CAN BE MAINTAINED THAT, AS LONG AS
THE DETENTE PROCESS GOES ON, THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS

SITUATION IN THE WP COUNTRIES SHOULD NOT DETERIORATE,
EVEN IF IT IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED THAT IT WILL
AUTOMATICALLY IMPROVE BECAUSE OF DETENTE.
- IN FACT DETENTE, AND ABOVE ALL THE ENGAGEMENTS
ACCEPTED BY THE SIGNATORIES OF THE HELSINKI FINAL
ACT HAVE LAID OUT FOUNDATIONS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL
ORDER THAT, BY GETTING COMMUNIST AND "CAPITALIST"
WORLDS NEARER TO ONE ANOTHER, SHOULD HELP CREATING AN
INTER-STATE MORALE MORE UNIFORM THAN IN THE PAST.
WE HAVE COME TO A POINT WHERE IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE,
WITHOUT GOING THROUGH UNFORESEEABLE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES,
TO DOGMATICALLY IGNORE THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES WHICH
LAY AT THE BASIS OF THE OTHER SOCIETIES. THESE VALUES
ARE THEREFORE BOUND TO BE AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGED, EVEN
IF THEY ARE NOT ALTOGETHER ACCEPTED. CONSEQUENTLY,
AN INCREASE OF MORAL PRESSURE IS LIKELY TO DEVELOP
ON THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED: IN EASTERN EUROPE THIS
SHOULD FAVOUR THE EXISTING CONFESSIONS, THUS MAKING
A WORSENING OF THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION THERE UNLIKELY.

8. HOWEVER, FOR ALL THIS TO BECOME A REALITY, IT IS
NECESSARY THAT THOSE IN THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WHO
ARE SEEKING A GREATER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SHOULD REALIZE
THAT THE CONFESSIONAL PHENOMENON REPRESENTS A QUESTION
DIRECTLY CONCERNING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF EACH
COMMUNIST COUNTRY. HENCE, ANY EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENTS
IN THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION CAN ONLY OCCUR IF THE LIMITS

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WITHIN WHICH SUCH IMPROVEMENTS CAN TAKE PLACE WOULD
BE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

9. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT, AT LEAST
IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN THE
TRADITIONALLY ORTHODOX COUNTRIES (USSR, ROMANIA,
BULGARIA) WILL IMPROVE SUBSTANTIALLY. THIS IS NOT ONLY
BECAUSE THE CHURCH DOES NOT HOLD IN THOSE COUNTRIES
A SIGNIFICANT MORAL AND POLITICAL POWER, BUT ALSO

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BECAUSE THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON APPEARS TO BE, IN
MANY CASES, CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE WIDER PROBLEM
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES.

10. IN THE OTHER WP COUNTRIES THE OUTLOOK IS SLIGHTLY
MORE FAVOURABLE BOTH FOR THE MORAL AND POLITICAL
WEIGHT THAT THE LOCAL DENOMINATIONS WELD, PARTICULARLY
IN SOME NATIONS, AND BECAUSE A MODUS VIVENDI HAS BEEN
REACHED THAT, ALTHOUGH FAR FROM BEING PERFECT, STILL
LEAVES THE DOOR OPEN TO HOPE.

- BUT AGAIN IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE LOCAL DENOMINATIONS
WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY A RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MUCH BEYOND
THE PRESENT-DAY LEVEL: FOR, THOSE IN POWER COULD NOT
POSSIBLY ACCEPT THAT THOSE LIMITS ARE SURPASSED, BEYOND
WHICH THE VERY CONNOTATIONS OF THE COMMUNIST STATES
WOULD BE ALTERED.

11. AS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S
LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE WP COUNTRIES, THAT SEEMS TO
BE STRICTLY DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE DIALOGUE
ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE VATICAN AND THE EASTERN COUNTRIES'
GOVERNMENTS.

- IN THIS CONNECTION, IT MAY BE NOTED THAT HUNGARY-
ESPECIALLY AFTER KADAR'S RECENT VISIT TO THE VATICAN-AND
POLAND APPEAR NEARER TO NORMALIZING THEIR RELATIONS
WITH THE HOLY SEE, UP TO THE POINT OF EXCHANGING FORMAL
DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS.

- NEGOTIATIONS ARE TECHNICALLY MORE ADVANCED WITH

POLAND (THERE ARE ALREADY, AS IT IS KNOWN, "DELEGATIONS FOR PERMANENT WORKING CONTACTS"). WITH HUNGARY, HOWEVER, THE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS ARE APPARENTLY LESS DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME; HENCE, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE LATTER WILL BE THE FIRST TO NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NUMEROUS AND HARD OBSTACLES

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STILL TO BE OVERCOME SHOULD NOT BE UNDER-RATED: MOSCOW'S DIFFIDENCE AND THAT OF THE LOCAL EPISCOPATES BEING NOT THE LEAST AMONG THEM.

- SOMETHING SEEMS TO BE MOVING ALSO IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOLLOWING THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF MONS. TOMASEK AS BISHOP AND THE SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES BETWEEN THE LATTER AND PRESIDENT HUSAK. THIS MIGHT POINT TO A CERTAIN AVAILABILITY ON THE PART OF THE CZECK GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. HOWEVER, IT IS TOO SOON TO TELL WHETHER THIS ATTITUDE WOULD LEAD, IN THE FUTURE, TO A REAL NORMALIZATION (WHICH TODAY IS PREVENTED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, BY THE THORNY PROBLEM OF THE BISHOP'S NOMINATIONS IN THE NUMEROUS VACANT DIOCESES).

- AS FOR THE OTHER WP COUNTRIES, THE DIALOGUE WITH THE HOLY SEE WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE. HOWEVER, NO SIGNIFICANT RESULTS ARE TO BE EXPECTED. THE COEXISTENCE BETWEEN "SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM" AND RELIGIOUS IDEALISM, IF IT IS NOT MERELY INSTRUMENTAL, IS A VERY DIFFICULT EXERCISE; AND FOR BOTH PARTIES THE RENOUNCIATION TO THEIR BASIC PRINCIPLES IS AN OUTRIGHT IMPOSSIBILITY.

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